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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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SUBJECT: EUR A/S FRIED'S MEETINGS WITH AUSTRIAN OFFICIALS

-- NOVEMBER 15, 2005

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Carol van Voorst. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: In discussions with Austrian interlocutors, EUR Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried outlined the strategic agenda for U.S. engagement with the Austrian EU Presidency. Most of our work concerns areas outside the EU. One key is the "frontiers of freedom" in Europe in an area analogous to the European part of the EU's New Neighborhood Policy. The Austrians said the Balkans are a foreign policy priority. Fried said the Broader Middle East is also key. The Austrian conference on "Islam in a Pluralistic World" was an important contribution. Fried called for common action on Iran. On China, the Austrians said they would not take the lead on the arms embargo. On Turkey, Fried and his interlocutors agreed that accession talks should proceed automatically. End Summary.

2. (U) On November 15, A/S Fried met with Austrian Chancellery Diplomatic Advisor Hans-Peter Manz, MFA State Secretary Hans Winkler, MFA Secretary General Johannes Kyrle,

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and MFA Political Director Thomas Mayr-Harting on the margins of the Austrian-sponsored conference on "Islam in a Pluralistic World." (Septel reports on the conference, including A/S Fried's remarks.)

Austria's EU Presidency/U.S.-EU Agenda

3. (C) A/S Fried told his counterparts that it is important to set the agenda for Austria's European Union Presidency. The larger strategic agenda for the U.S. and Europe focusses on areas outside the EU, including the Broader Middle East, Iran, Belarus, the Caucasus, and Ukraine. We should focus on results.

4. (C) In response to Mayr-Harting's invitation to a Political Directors' meeting at Alpbach, Tirol on January 11, 2006, Fried said he would attend.

"Frontiers of Freedom"

5. (C) Fried said the U.S.-EU strategic agenda includes what we are calling the "frontiers of freedom" -- the Balkans, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the South Caucasus, and, in a different context, Russia. The EU's New Neighborhood Policy was one of the smartest strategic moves the EU has made in years, he said. Europe has interests in the neighborhood, just as Russia does, and neither has a monopoly.

6. (C) Fried said we need to support and push Ukrainian reform, helping the Ukrainians focus on their strategic direction. The EU cannot give Ukraine a firm prospect of EU membership -- the Ukrainians have to earn it -- but the EU should not slam the door on them. We need to coordinate on frozen conflicts, as well. There was a lot of talk in Russia about places they called "unrecognized states" -- a dubious concept. We will not accept the creeping annexation of former Soviet lands.

7. (C) Mayr-Harting said maintaining Belarussian independence will be a key achievement. Fried said no referendum on union would be free -- it would really be an annexation. Fried said we should think about a joint mission to Minsk to deliver a message to Lukashenko. The message had to be clear, and has to say there are consequences if Lukashenko steals the election. Rather than preserving programs and access, we should look for ways to advance freedom.

Balkans

8. (C) Winkler said the Balkans will be the Austrian presidency's foreign policy priority. Austria will invite Balkan foreign ministers to a meeting during the EU Foreign

Ministers' meeting in Salzburg in March. The Interior Minister will also invite counterparts from the countries of the New Neighborhood Policy to an Interior Ministers' meeting in Vienna in May. Providing a European perspective to the Balkans is important for reform.

19. (C) Fried said Martti Ahtissari, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, does not want to let 2006 pass without decisions on the status of Kosovo. We need to make clear to the Kosovars that they need to earn their independence. Mayr-Harting said Austria wants an important NATO role in the Balkans. The U.S. has the greatest leverage, especially on the Kosovar Albanians. Fried said that the fact that Austria has troops in the Balkans -- numbering almost 1000, with some 600 in Kosovo and over 300 in Bosnia -- with no caveats is important.

10. (C) Fried said the Croatians could not simply go through the motions of pretending to go after Ante Gotovina. There cannot be different rules for Croatia than there are for Serbia. Manz said Chancellor Schuessel is in frequent contact with Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader on this issue.

Middle East

11. (C) The U.S.-EU strategic agenda includes reform in the Broader Middle East, Fried said. Austria's conference on "Islam in a Pluralistic World" was extremely impressive. The presence of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai was powerful. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik's statement was a clear statement of the obligation to help Iraq and Afghanistan.

12. (C) Mayr-Harting said he visited Iraq with an EU troika group. The constitution seemed so decentralized as to raise questions of its workability. He asked whether it would be useful for Austria to provide experts to help Iraq develop federal mechanisms.

13. (C) Fried said the Iranians are apparently not interested in a settlement on the nuclear issue. It will be hard to take the issue to the UN Security Council. Manz said it will not be easy if Russia and China resist, but the EU had agreed to support it. Fried pointed out that President Putin wants the G-8 Summit to be a success, and might therefore show flexibility.

China

14. (C) On the China Arms Embargo, it was important that the U.S. and EU had started a strategic dialogue on China and on Asia in general, Fried said. Opposition to a lift of the embargo had united all elements in Washington. Kyrle said Austria would not be in front on the China arms embargo.

Turkey

15. (C) Fried said the negotiations for Turkish accession to the EU are on track, and the burden is now on the Turks. Turkish accession is at least ten years away, and both Turkey and the EU will be different places then than they are now. Austria should just let the process take its course. Manz said, "Don't worry about the Austrian Presidency."

Chancellor Schuessel's December 8 Visit to Washington

16. (C) Fried said Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel's December 8 visit to Washington will be a good occasion to outline the framework of U.S.-European relations. The President will want to talk about issues beyond the EU. The outward focus is critical to us.
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